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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PTER](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ARAZ AZIMOV'S COMMENTS ON
BILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE

REF: A. 06 BAKU 01837

[1](#)B. 06 BAKU 01753

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On April 12, the Ambassador and Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov met to prepare for the April 19 bilateral security consultations. Azimov will lead the largest GOAJ delegation in the ten year history of the consultations, and said his primary goal for the consultations is to identify a new mechanism that will produce results on our bilateral security agenda throughout the year. Azimov provided several suggestions on the agenda items on counterterrorism, security outside the Caspian, Train and Equip, and defense reforms; he also previewed significant new non-military contributions to NATO efforts in Afghanistan -- including contributions to a PRT, funding for a girls, school, and security and demining training in Baku -- that will be announced at the May 2 NAC. Azimov welcomed a possible OSD advisor on Azerbaijan's national security-related documents. Azimov clearly views the April 19 meeting as an important opportunity to invigorate our security relationship. Presidential Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev also underscored the importance of the talks to the Ambassador in a separate April 12 meeting (septel). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov and the Ambassador met on April 11 to review preparations for the April 19 bilateral security dialogue. The Ambassador began the meeting by raising Department of Defense A/S Peter Rodman's February letter to President Aliyev, which underscored the importance of our bilateral security cooperation. Azimov affirmed our strong bilateral security collaboration, noting that the annual security consultations have been the springboard for our cooperation in many areas.

[1](#)3. (C) Azimov said this year's Azerbaijani delegation is the largest and most competent in the ten year history of the security consultations. Azimov remarked that the key to making the bilateral security dialogue successful is ensuring practical, concrete results. He hopes the April 19 talks will result in a clear follow-up mechanism to implement and monitor agreed next steps, to produce results and keep momentum going throughout the year on our bilateral security agenda.

Specific Comments on Agenda Items

¶4. (C) Azimov provided the following comments on the agenda:

¶A. Counterterrorism: Azimov remarked that Azerbaijan and the United States could do more together to address the ideological roots of terrorism. Azimov made this comment in the context of distinguishing between the capabilities and political/ideological dimension of combating terrorism. Azimov noted that the Ministry of National Security representative to the bilateral security talks may have a proposal on this topic. Azimov said the GOAJ also seeks to broaden its non-intelligence cooperation with the United States on counterterrorism measures, noting specifically that Azerbaijan would like to learn more about US experience in data processing and border controls.

¶B. Security Outside the Caspian: Azimov noted that Azerbaijan's work in projecting stability outside the immediate Caspian region is not solely confined to its role in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Accordingly, he requested that the agenda item be renamed "Security Outside the Caspian and the OIC." Azimov also noted that, as a coalition partner, the GOAJ would very much appreciate a USG briefing on the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. He added that these conflicts also tied to the broader question of counterterrorism cooperation and a possible expanded role for Azerbaijan in helping the US combat the ideology of terrorism. Azimov also questioned why Iran was not included on the agenda, noting that he would very much appreciate a briefing on current US thinking on Iran. (We explained that we intend to raise it.)

¶C. Train and Equip (TEP): The Ambassador said the USG is still considering the modalities of a potential TEP offer to

the GOAJ, but any offer would be conditioned on the trained units deploying to Afghanistan. The Ambassador noted that a key goal of any potential TEP program would be the increased professionalization of the Azerbaijani military. Azimov responded that President Aliyev had announced to the NAC that Azerbaijan would double its current troop contribution in Afghanistan from 22 to 44, and does not have the capacity to expand to the bigger presence required by a TEP. "44 does not make 300," he said. Azimov also noted that the NK conflict makes it difficult to sell more peacekeeping operations to certain segments of the government. However, Azimov said Azerbaijan plans to announce significant new non-military contributions in Afghanistan at the May 2 NAC (see paras 8 and 9 below). (Comment: We believe we need to explain the concept fully to Azimov at the talks.)

¶D. Defense Reform and NATO IPAP: Azimov requested that the "defense reform" part of this agenda item be renamed "security sector reform." Azimov underscored that Azerbaijan's ongoing National Security reform process is not limited only to the MOD. Through the National Security Concept (which has been presented to the President's Office for approval), the MFA is leading a government-wide process that will reform the way Azerbaijan conducts its national security affairs. Azimov added that there is a large and mistaken misperception within Azerbaijani society that defense reforms should not be carried out because this could weaken Azerbaijan's position vis-a-vis Nagorno-Karabakh. Given the MOD's lack of enthusiasm for substantive defense reforms and this broader societal sensitivity, Azimov suggested that any discussions about defense reforms should be focus on "increasing the capability or effectiveness of the Azerbaijani armed forces."

¶E. Critical Energy Infrastructure: Azimov noted that key officials from the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Presidential Security Services are participating in the delegation and will brief the USG on Azerbaijan's vulnerabilities and needs.

Working Groups Proposal

15. (C) Azimov said his primary goal for the April 19 talks is to create a mechanism to ensure that decisions taken during the annual security dialogue are implemented, and that results and forward momentum are ensured throughout the year.

Azimov and the Ambassador agreed that the specific modalities of this new mechanism should be discussed further during the April 19 consultations. They agreed that the key point is to create a mechanism under the two co-chairs -- whether this is an official "working group" or in an some other alternative format -- to follow up with items agreed to during the consultations and to prepare for future security consultations. Azimov emphasized that both sides need to ensure that any such mechanism does not dilute the MFA's overall authority at the security dialogue. (Comment: We agree. The MFA is one of the most competent -- in terms of capacity and quality of the personnel -- GOAJ ministries and leads the successful, for Azerbaijan, interagency process that is changing the way the GOAJ conducts its national security policy.)

MOD Participation

16. (C) Azimov said the MOD plans to be represented at the consultations by the Azerbaijani Defense Attache in Washington, commenting that the MOD is not comfortable with civilian-led talks. He said he would prefer Baku-based MOD representation at this meeting, and agreed to the Ambassador's request to seek higher-level MOD participation in the GOAJ delegation. (Note: DATT also is encouraging Baku-based MOD participation through its channels.)

Proposed USG Advisor on Security Documents

17. (C) The Ambassador told Azimov that OSD is considering providing an advisor to engage with the GOAJ in government-to-government consultations on drafting Azerbaijan's Military Doctrine and Foreign Policy Strategy, per Azimov's request in December 2006 (ref A). Azimov noted that the National Security Concept (NSC) has already been sent to his superiors (e.g., the President's Office), but

said there is the need for "continual review" of the document. He said the advisor could assist in this process and participate in "the Quartet"/Foreign Experts Advisory Group. ("The Quartet" is an informal grouping of the Ambassadors and security experts from the US, UK, Germany, and Turkey that was formed to advise the GOAJ in the drafting of its NSC and other security-related documents, per ref B. The US has been inactive in this group and Azimov was clearly pleased with our re-engagement.) Azimov also noted that the advisor and perhaps a USG-GOAJ working group on security sector reforms created during the security dialogue could assist the MFA in bolstering and developing cooperation and influence in the GOAJ interagency working group created to draft the NSC. (Note: Azimov, who chairs this national security group, wants to transform it into a permanent GOAJ interagency process on security-related issues.) Azimov noted that the MOD is supposed to be working on the Military Doctrine and a strategic review process, but he had "no idea" how much progress the MOD has made.

Preview of New NATO Commitments

18. (C) Azimov commented that Azerbaijan is on the "right track" of pursuing "step-by-step" relations with NATO. Azimov noted that relations between NATO and Azerbaijan are based on the need to provide "mutual reliability and commitments" to one another. Accordingly, Azimov indicated that the GOAJ is not going to "run too fast" toward NATO.

19. (C) Azimov said the GOAJ will announce four new non-military NATO commitments to Afghanistan during the May 2 NAC in Brussels, which they will discuss in Washington. While the GOAJ is still finalizing these proposals, Azimov said they will focus on the following areas:

- 1) Azerbaijan will co-lead/contribute personnel to a Provincial Reconstruction Team led by Turkey.
- 2) Funding for the construction of a school for women.
- 3) Provision of security training in Baku for Afghan security and law enforcement units.
- 4) Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) will provide demining training in Baku for Afghan demining units.

¶10. (C) Azimov said the GOAJ is working with the Turks to finalize the details but would very much appreciate information from the USG on preferred modalities for these contributions. The Ambassador suggested that the April 19 security talks could help put Azimov in contact with the appropriate USG experts.

Comment

¶11. (C) Azimov views the April 19 consultations as an important opportunity to deepen and invigorate our security relationship. Presidential Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev also underscored the importance of the talks to the Ambassador in a separate April 12 meeting. The breadth and seniority of the GOAJ interagency delegation is unprecedented and will allow us to explore a broad range of critical security issues. USG efforts to energize the bilateral security consultations are central to our broader effort to raise the strategic level of our relationship with Azerbaijan, as outlined in the Secretary's February letter to President Aliyev. We also continue to believe that attention to issues of importance to Azerbaijan on security will help us advance our goals in all areas of the relationship. We are grateful for PM's assistance in planning for the April 19 meeting.

DERSE